



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes
February 5, 2019**

Commission Present: Bossange, Kaplan, Hale, Pierce, Farrell, and Montroll

Staff Present: Wight, Comai, Merriman-Shapiro and Bushnell

The meeting was convened at 5:34 p.m. by Commission Chair Kaplan

Approval of Agenda

Kaplan pointed out that the date was incorrect on the agenda and asked for a movement to change the date. Pierce motioned to change the date, Hale seconded, all were in favor. Wight asked to add 311 North Ave to agenda, Hale moved, Bossange seconded, motion carried. Hale moved to approve amended agenda, seconded by Pierce motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Pierce read aloud with the motions included, motion made to approve the consent agenda by Hale, second by Farrell, motion carried.

311 North Ave

Historical preservation approval for stone house and park next to the bike path. 12 acres currently co-owned by city and Vermont Land Trust. May be closing on the property as early as Feb 18th. Kaplan asked to put forward conservation easement for property 311 North Ave (12 acres) held by VHCB and Historic preservation easement on Stone House co-held by VHCB and Preservation Trust of Vermont. Pierce moved, Bossange seconds, all in favor by unanimous vote.

Moran Plant and Memorial Auditorium Update

Memorial Auditorium: Merriman-Shapiro stated that a city wide survey and town hall meeting showed that the community desires for Memorial would cost more than the city's bonding ability. The community members present at the town hall meeting were given 4 options concerning possibilities of the building (shuttering building and doing nothing, bringing the building up to code, fully modernizing the building so it could host large events as requested, and updating the surrounding area AKA Super Block). Community generally chose the idea to redevelop the entire block instead of just the building. CEDO will be reporting back to PACC later in the spring and will come back to Parks Commission in the future. Cost estimates for all versions of the project are available on Memorial web page.

Farrell asked what the main desires for the city were. Merriman-Shapiro reports that having a flexible venue for concerts, shows, and community events, and having the auditorium remain as large central gathering space were key desires. The annex (lower) level could be used for different and smaller events/uses. Community members were enthusiastic about adding kitchen facility for events and ensuring there would be youth lead programming in the space (some wanted club 242, others were happy as long as youth were involved in using the space). To achieve the idea to use the space for concerts and large events the building must be modernized (seating, elevator, improvements, addition to added to building with freight and regular elevator). The report from Bargeman Henry is on Memorial webpage and contains details on these modernization updates. The largest costs are for the modernization effort.



Pierce asked what the deal with the motel is? The Midtown Motel and the duplex next door are owned by Jeff Nick and Jeff Davis, (Jeff Nick on Church Street Commission). These two envision development of the space someday, but they are unable to do so with their current financing. There may be an opportunity for the city to partner with them (or to buy them out).

Hale asked if it is property holders holding up the deal. That is generally correct.

Bossange asked if the cost to get it up to code the cost would be \$18 mil, why not sell it and rent part of the building as city space (work with owners of adjacent property and let the owners of that space develop Memorial and the surrounding area). He feels that Memorial is a dinosaur and a cumbersome, and fears that it is only going to be a money pit. Merriman-Shapiro says that the community (and the mayor) is extremely excited about a plan. They are not interested in selling the building.

Hale shared that a lot of the places where events were once held are gone or disappearing. A space like Memorial is needed for all sorts of events. She considers herself a pragmatist and “cheap,” but there are no spaces available. Memorial is the only space we could use downtown.

Merriman-Shapiro thanked the Parks Commission for their feedback. CEDO is currently trying to figure out what redevelopment of the whole block entails. The city is looking at range and scale of events so they don’t overbuild the wrong types of facilities. A study is being done on this and the information will be available by the end of March (looking at venues within 30 miles of the city).

Bossange points out that we need a catalyst to get Nick and Davis to move forward. Merriman-Shapiro states that we need to move quickly and continue to try to understand the building in a larger context. By March or April more of a plan will be in place. The building will probably not be able to generate enough revenue to be self-sustaining, but we need to know exactly what the potential revenues and deficits will be.

Kaplan asked who will manage that space. Wight answered that, ideally, there would be a private management company with an RFP. Insuring that lower income community members can afford to rent/use the space can be stipulated in RFP.

Kaplan asked to be kept in the loop. Merriman-Shapiro said she will do so and that she would like to come back once more plans are in place.

Moran Plant: Kaplan asked if there were specifics that commissioners want to know about. Merriman-Shapiro clarified that what can be done with current funds on hand are shown on poster displayed on the right in the front of the room, and future phases for the building are on left poster. There has been a dialogue over how much brick should be kept/what should go. She went on to explain that the city has \$5.4 mil in the budget, and phase one stays within that budget. That said, there are future phases envisioned once original phase is completed. Moran is a brownfield site, and cleaning up the space is mandated by the state. The city has funds allocated for this project, but we need to use the money we have now or find new money once the TIF funds expire.

Farrell asked if funds available are sufficient to obtain basic plan. Merriman-Shapiro reports that that is correct, but would not include the awning or furniture illustrated in the images. The FRAME concept is barebones, but it’s a start. She would like to arrange a tour the building in the spring (possibly April) for



the commission. Moran is a tall building, but not a wide. The footprint is less than 2 acres with a small bit of lawn. Not a lot of gained green space if the building is demolished. The foundation of the building is 102' above sea level, but basement goes down to 84' and is weighted to sit on lake bottom. The plan for the floor of the FRAME is a concrete slab at grade with ventilation to ensure it is safe for the public to use in the future as the building is developed. Other than the partial demolition and filling in the basement, minimal roofing needs to be put in place (roof will not be accessible or useable until elevator or stairs are built). Planning & Zoning requires restrooms, so those are included in the FRAME concept. As Moran is an historic building there is some room interpretation about the history and what can be done to the building. Evidence of what the building was in the past needs to be kept in order to make changes and modernize.

Bossange asked when the building was shut down. Merriman-Shapiro explained that it closed in 1986, and was sold to the city in 1989 (and city has been trying to figure out what to do with it ever since).

Hale asked if there was any other possibility for the space beyond the FRAME plan. Merriman-Shapiro explained that the options are for the FRAME or to take it down (and taking it down costs more). Moran cannot be imploded because of contamination to the lake and surrounding parks, and it's close proximity to surrounding buildings. Deconstruction needs to take place piece by piece. Estimates were procured by the city on the cost to demolish the building down to the foundation, to 2' below grade, down to the subbasements, or to remove everything (which would exceed \$10 million on high end). The most we can afford are the first two scenarios (foundation or 2' below grade) and would cost between \$4.5-6.5 mil.

Hale asked what next steps might be. Merriman-Shapiro has brought information on the FRAME concept to multiple groups within the community. The next step is to meet with PACC on 2/13. She hopes to leave the meeting with a resolution authorizing forward movement with all haste to go out and procure necessary contractual arrangements. CEDO will go to city council on 2/19 and board of finance at the same time. Merriman-Shapiro is hopeful there will be a clear path forward after these meetings. The city must be obligated and bonded for TIF funds by 12/31/2019 (which ultimately means plans must be completed, the building must be permitted, and accurate numbers need to be prepared by 10/31/2019).

Kaplan points out that Moran FRAME will become a city park. It will require staffing, cleaning, care, upkeep, and security. Wight states that BPRW funding will be used for basic things and will provide a high level of care. Parks has submitted 3 versions of a budget for different levels of space use. Everything from very basic upkeep to extensive year round care.

Kaplan asked if there were any further questions. Merriman-Shapiro offered to come back in March and provide the commission with an update.

Kaplan asked if a letter of support would be helpful. Merriman-Shapiro said that would be great. Hale, Price, Bossange, all commission were in support of a letter. Comai asked what the ideal timeline for the first phase would be. It depends on what comes out of zoning process, but the goal is to obligate the \$5.4 million in funding even if permit is appealed. Potentially, work could start in fall or winter of 2019 with a full roll out in 2020. This work includes site resolution, demolition, and stabilization.



Hale thanked Kirsten for all the hard work she has put into this and for all the effort she has put into other CEDO projects.

Public Forum (Time Certain 6:00 PM)

Public forum opened at 6:22 p.m. by Commission Chair Kaplan.

Seeing nobody, the public forum closed.

Public forum closed at 6:22 p.m.

Trees Ordinance and Urban Forest Plan Update

Comai shared that in 2015 BPRW came up with masterplan, setting goals and outline for trees. One goal was to update urban forestry masterplan. The plan was written in 2002 and has not been touched since. This original plan was funded through grant money from ice storm in 1998. The tree department is in process of updating plan. Comai read the plan, saw where the city was in 2002, and looked at what the goals were then and how it compares to now. The tree department has met, started discussion of new goals and needs, and will update Urban Forestry Plan by the end of the year. Currently, there is an outline of where we were, where we are, and where we're going and how we're getting there. Comai's predecessor built the plan from nothing but was never able to implement it. Comai and his team can.

In conjunction with UFP, there is also a tree planting plan. City has a tree inventory (12,434 trees currently within streets, parks, and 3 cemeteries). All maintenance records are listed in system (when work is done, tree condition, size, etc...). Comai has gotten feedback from state and wants to make sure plan works with climate action plan and other city ordinances. Speaking of which, a critical part of tree plan is updating the city tree ordinances. Current ordinances are outdated (most recent updates are from 1995), and are grossly inadequate for our current needs. Warren Spinner started the process to update and revise in 2007, but never finalized that information. Comai has pulled ideas/concepts/guidelines from other cities (don't need to reinvent the wheel), and the department will now sit down and review new plan, talk to mayor, open up the plan and ordinance updates to public comment, and go before ordinance committee. Tree ordinances must be in place that complements our other goals. The city needs to protect what we have and add more trees. We need to address the loss and replacement of canopy, private properties with problem trees; nothing currently addresses these issues in the current ordinances.

Kaplan asked if everyone had seen a copy of the masterplan. Farrell has not. Wight will provide commission members with copy. Comai believes that the tree masterplan should be looked over, examined, and used.

Kaplan stated that public input is critical in plan development.

Hale asked if there are other communities in VT that have his level of masterplan for trees. Comai shared that there are 3 cities in VT (Rutland, S. Burlington, and us). Other cities have plans in place, but nothing like what we're looking at. Urban tree plans range from basic to extremely detailed. Ours will be extremely detailed.

Kaplan asked when the city will start work on City Hall Park. Wight said that bids come in on Monday (2/11). She hopes to have information ready to attend the City Council/Board of Finance meeting 2/19.



If a proposal cannot be completed in time BPRW will have to wait to introduce their plans until 3/11. The Parks Commission would be welcome to show up for 2/19 meeting (and appreciated).

Hale asked if there is a serious concern about City Hall Park not making it through Board of Finance. Wight will reach out and inform council if need be. Wight also reports that Keep the Park Green are now trying to stop the park updates based on possible illness from the proposed fountain.

Heineberg Senior Center Update

Wight explained there is not a lot of new information. Gary Rogers has been representing parks at meetings and Wight went to last meeting. Councilors Knodell and Hartnett and Wight met with the mayor to get an idea of his wishes when it comes to Heineberg. The general idea is to move forward, but he would appreciate if there was no or minimal cost to the city. BPRW has run the numbers on the Champlain Senior Center. \$99,000 on top of \$40,000 allocated (mostly the cost for staff). About \$20,000 shy of where it would be (assuming \$58,000 continues as support from the city). The building is one piece, and work would probably be done in 2 phases. The city would take on management, but the organization continues in ownership (Heineberg Senior Center owns connected nursing home). The Senior Center has some savings and they also have a CD that matures in 2021 (\$150,000). It is unclear if that money could or should be used for repairs/updates.

Hale asked what the problem is with lack of staffing. Wight explained that the loss of \$20,000 from United Way prevents them from staffing. The city is open to using the space, but needs to work out details. Hale offered to be part of meetings as a commission representative. Another meeting will be held in Feb, will do building analysis. Ultimately, the city wants the center to pay for the work that needs to be done.

Draft FY20 Department Goals

Wight explained the process started late last year for her. Wight met with BPRW staff and the mayor's office in January to discuss goals. Each division is responsible to provide her with their goals by March. Finalized goals are due to mayor in April and the commission in May (see document for details). The Planning Commission will take lead on harbor masterplan.

Bossange asked about multi-year goals and masterplan goals as well as new goals. He wanted to know how final draft will reflect these differences. Wight explained that goals will be categorized at individual division and overall department levels. The Mayor's priorities will also be taken into consideration. Bossange was overwhelmed by document and wanted to know if responsible parties could be put next to goals (goals are already divided by division, but Bossange wants to see point people listed). Wight reports that Neale Lunderville suggested putting goals on one page, keeping goals limited to the year, and keeping something of a task diary. Bossange wants to make sure that point people know it's their priority. Wight confirmed that that is the case. Wight also reiterated that this is a working document, ever evolving.

In their most recent meeting the Mayor asked Wight to add that Moran will be operational when phase one is completed, that Perkin's Pier will be seen as park, and that BCA, FFL, and BPRW communicate on meeting needs of Burlington children. He wants to see Penny for Parks promoted as public process, a plan around storm water developed for 2020, and 311 North Ave trail and use for stone house added to the plan. Wight wants to make it clear that, while these are the mayor's priorities, they are not one man's ideas. They are part of a plan for the whole city.



Hale asked if other organizations will be a part of discussion (specifically groups that are more experienced in dealing with marginalized populations). Wight answered that that is currently not the case. Rec goals for 2019 include completing Chapter 6 goals (who is doing what, what can the city do the best - identify, delegate, support).

Farrell asked about adding someone for data analytics. He would like to see that happen sooner rather than later. Kaplan asked if it could be part of BTV Stat. She wondered if the Mayor could add a Stat person in every department. Wight confirmed that looking at Stats, GIS priorities, and what would be the most helpful (tracking information on repair, existence, location, installation, etc...).

Update on Parks Foundation (Standing Item)

Bossange did not have an update on the parks foundation.

Director's Items

Wight updated that 311 North Ave will be closed out, the only issue tripping them up is storm water. No communications to VHCB from day one about stormwater easement. Must happen after conservation easement. Eric Farrell would prefer it otherwise, but it could go on for months. Expensive to extend the loan. Looking at an outline for a public meeting for Leddy in April, focusing on creating a "bike park," renovating tennis courts, replacing maintenance building, and creating a pause place. She would like commission members to attend. She also reports that Planning and Zoning's move to 645 Pine Street office will cause more BPRW people to have to move (again).

Commissioner's Items

Hale had a conversation with Bike Park individuals and would like commission to look at equity of folks who can bring items forward to the Parks Commission. Fundraising in impoverished and less influential communities is a major issue, and leaves members of that community without a voice. She would like to see Penny for Parks go back to its original purpose.

Wight mentioned that the Mayor would like to make process more obvious/understandable for individuals and groups who might approach for funding. The challenge is to balance needs for the community versus those who can come in and ask for pet projects. Bossange mentioned that the Parks Foundation works within boundaries set by Wight and BPRW, but it's still an issue because people don't know what the process is. Hale made it clear that this information needs to be constantly disseminated. Kaplan shared that staff spread around the city helps more people know how to apply for things. Wight plans to do a "mock" Penny for Parks bid in Wards 2 & 3 to engage with more community members. Hale reiterated that we need to think about how outreach happens in the community.

Kaplan brought up that on her Front Porch Forum someone suggested that a Friends of Pomeroy Park be created. Kaplan responded that it was a great idea. She recommends that commissioners ask FPF to give them a commissioner designation so they can post as themselves and in an official capacity. She felt that a Friends of Pomeroy group would be a great thing, and would love to see a "friends" group for every park.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 6:24 p.m. by Bossange, second by Hale, motion carried.